

Apr 11th, 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

# Film Music and the Cinematic Experience

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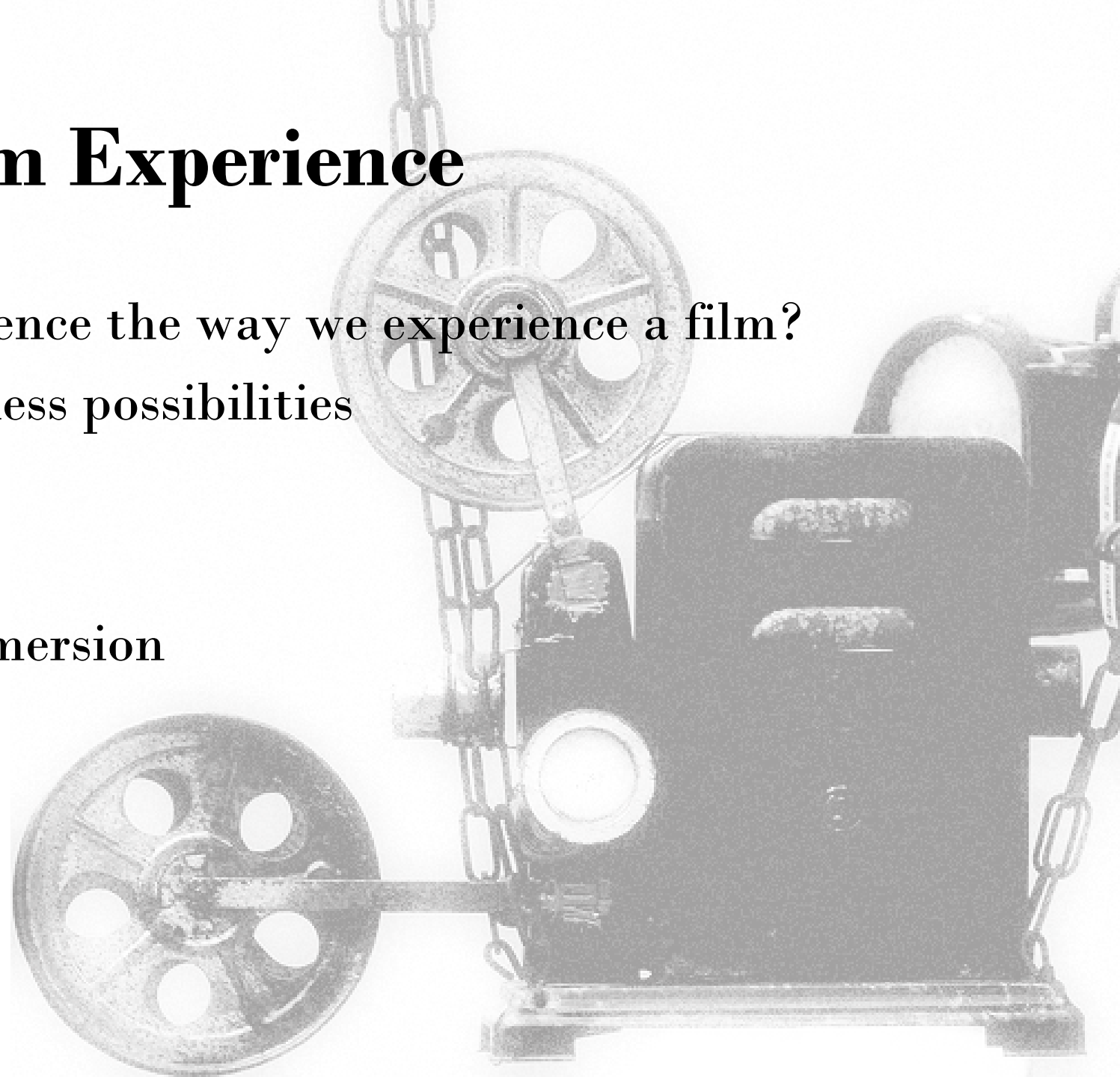
# **Music and the Film Experience**

By Brian Campbell



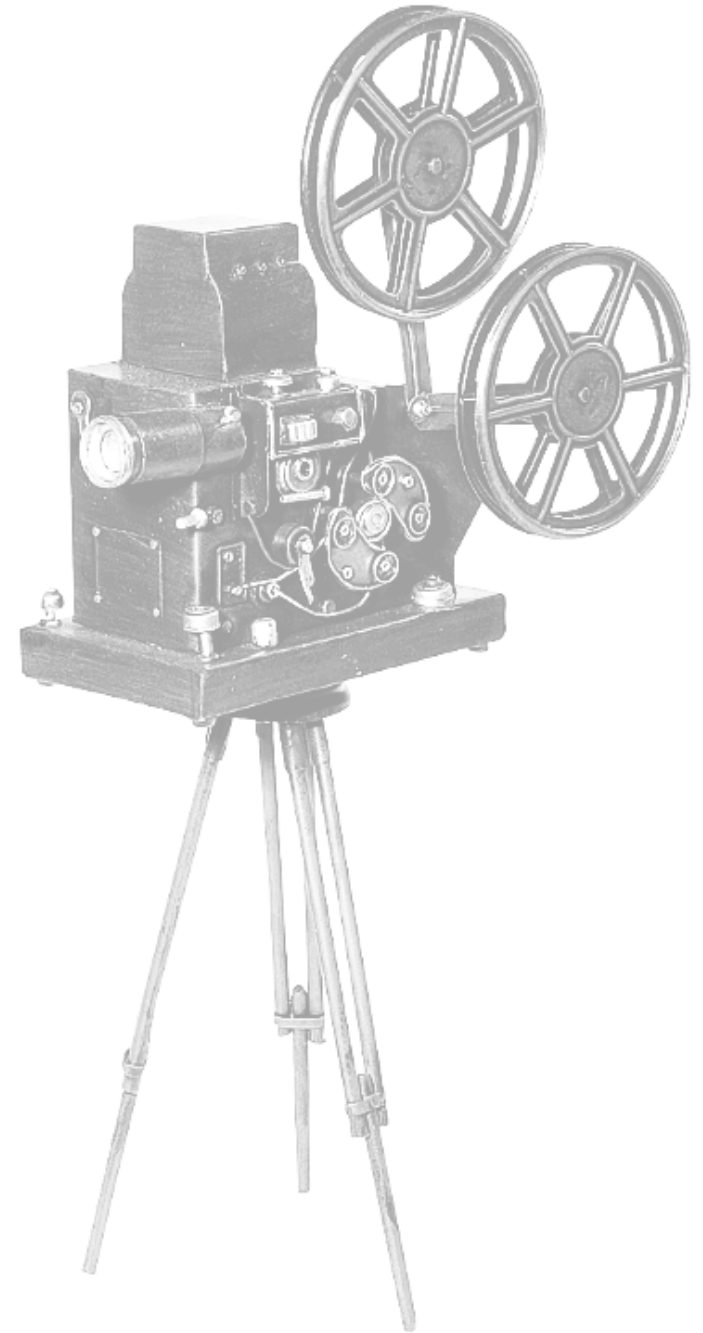
# Music and the Film Experience

- How does film music influence the way we experience a film?
- Diversity allows for countless possibilities
- Storytelling
- Mood & Psychological immersion
- Cultural association
- Allusions
- Aesthetic experience



# 1. Storytelling

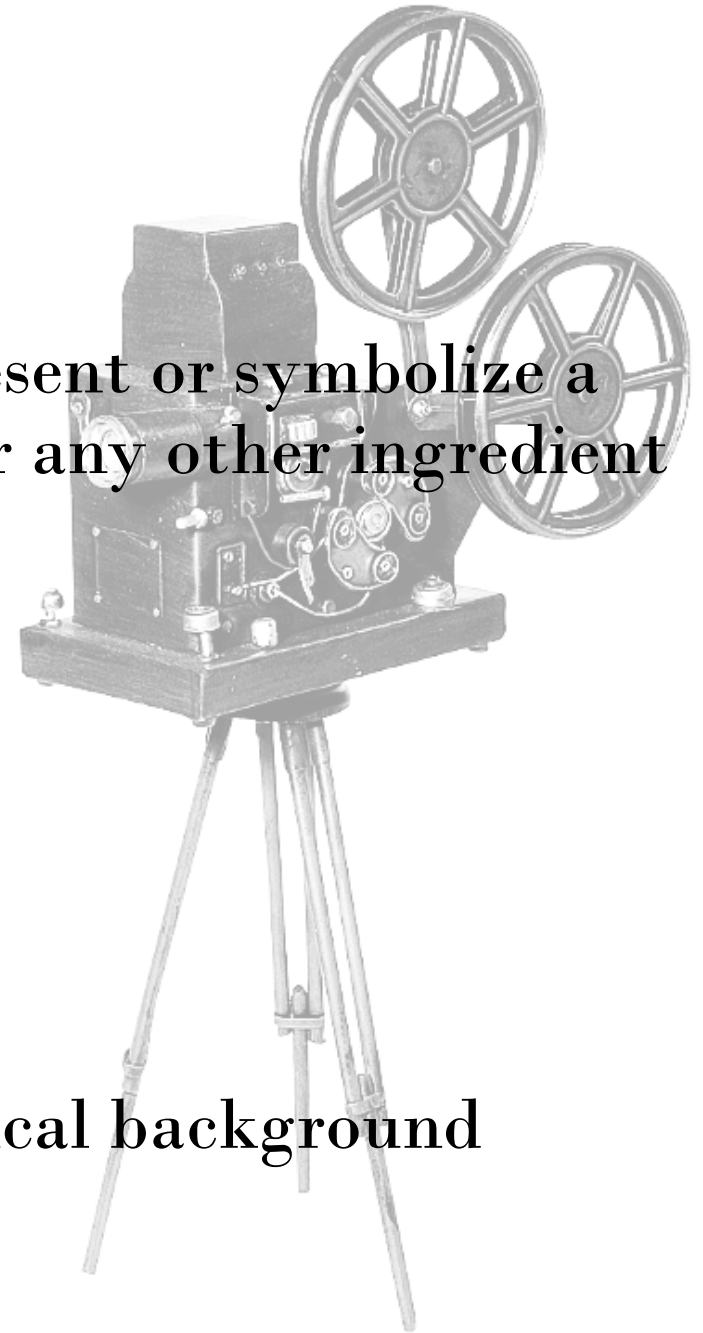
- Narrative voice
- Advance plot
- Leitmotifs
- Score structure & character as a whole





# Leitmotifs

- Definition: Theme “whose purpose is to represent or symbolize a person, object, place, idea, state of mind... or any other ingredient in a dramatic work.” (Whittall, 2001)
- Wagnerian influence
  - *Tristan und Isolde*
  - *Der Ring de Nibelungen*
- Early Hollywood composers came from classical background



# *Star Wars*

## John Williams

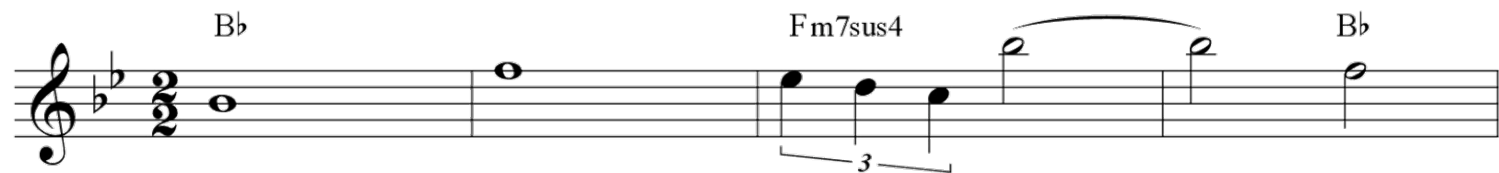
- Harkens back to Hollywood Golden Age romantic scores
- “Space opera”
- 11 themes in *Star Wars*
- 21 themes in original trilogy
- Associated with characters, places, themes
- Alterations to convey drama



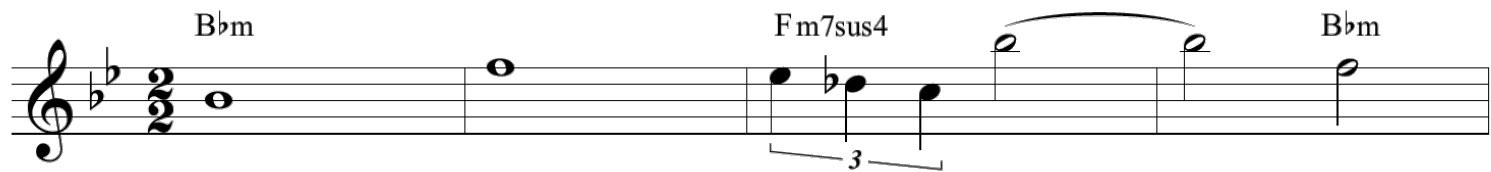
# *Star Wars*

## John Williams, cont'd

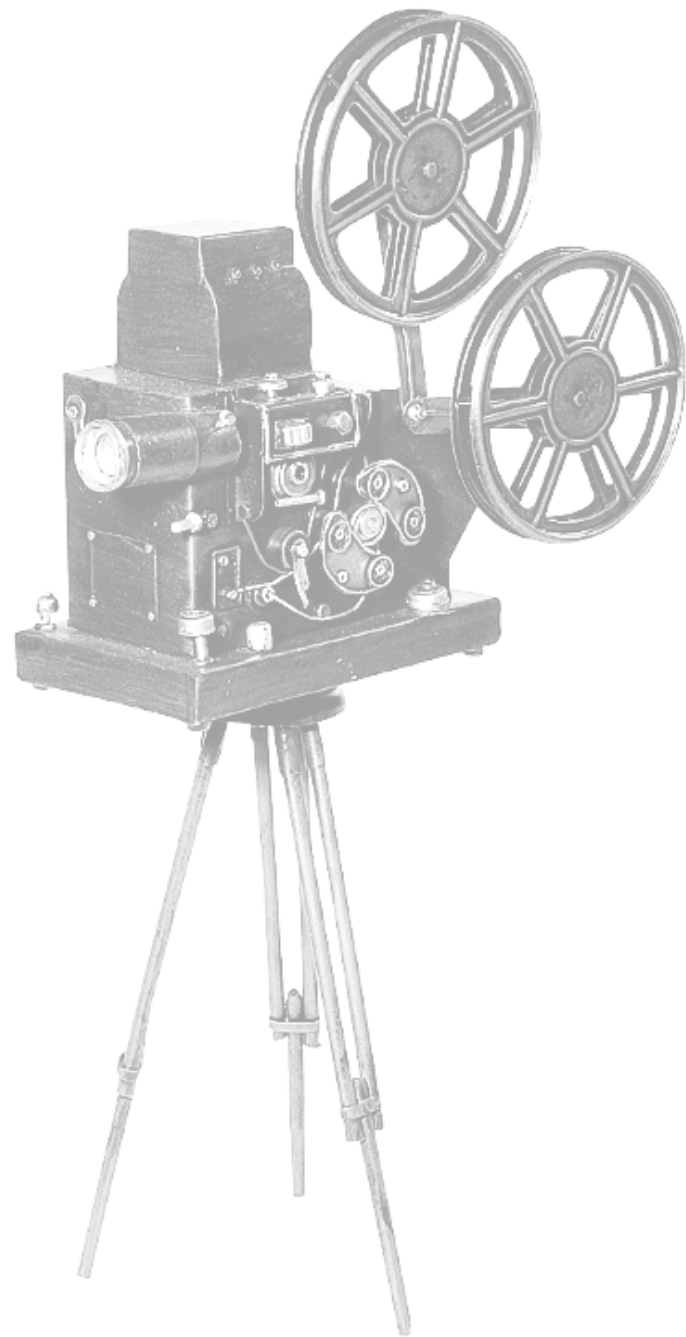
- “Change of Mode” (Bribitzer-Stull, 2015)



Original theme: Major



Altered theme: Minor



# *The Lord of the Rings* Howard Shore

- Nearly 9 hours of continuous music
- Stated that *Lord* is operatic in concept
- Wagnerian
  - Wanted music to be able to tell story even if there was no dialogue
  - Similar subject material: fantasy world

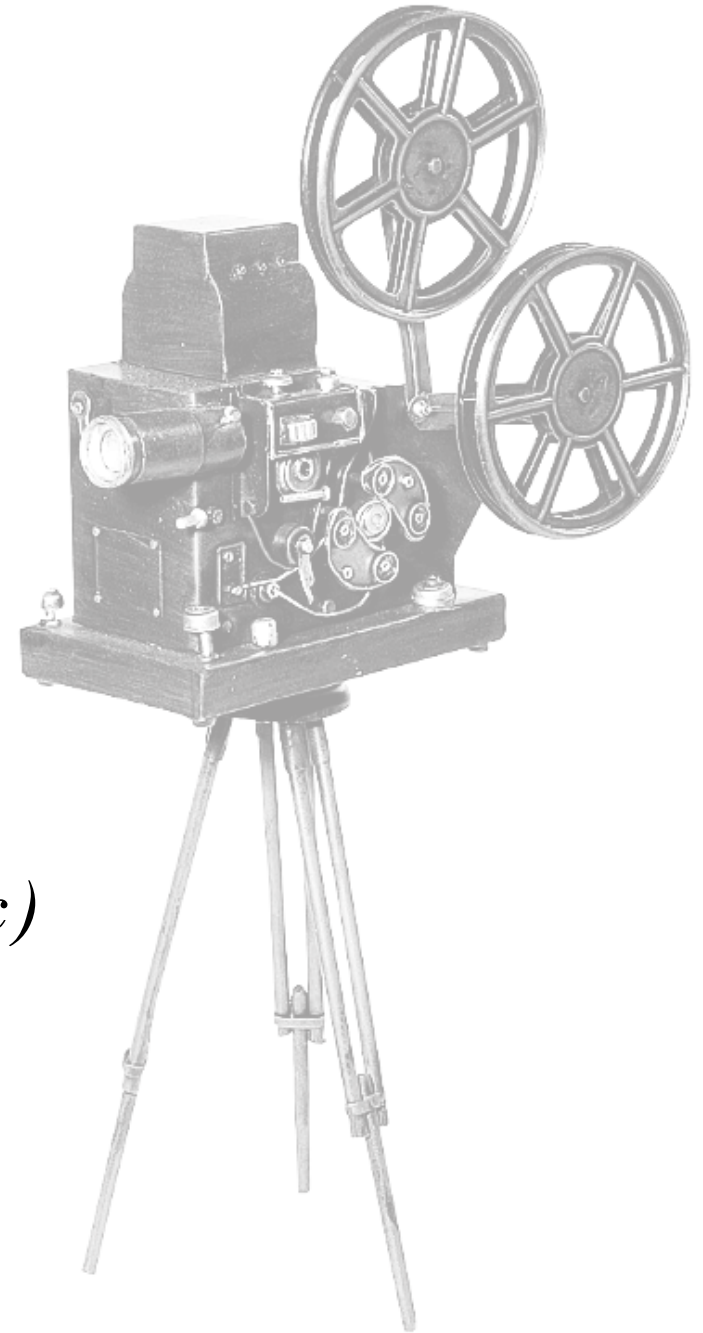




# *The Lord of the Rings*

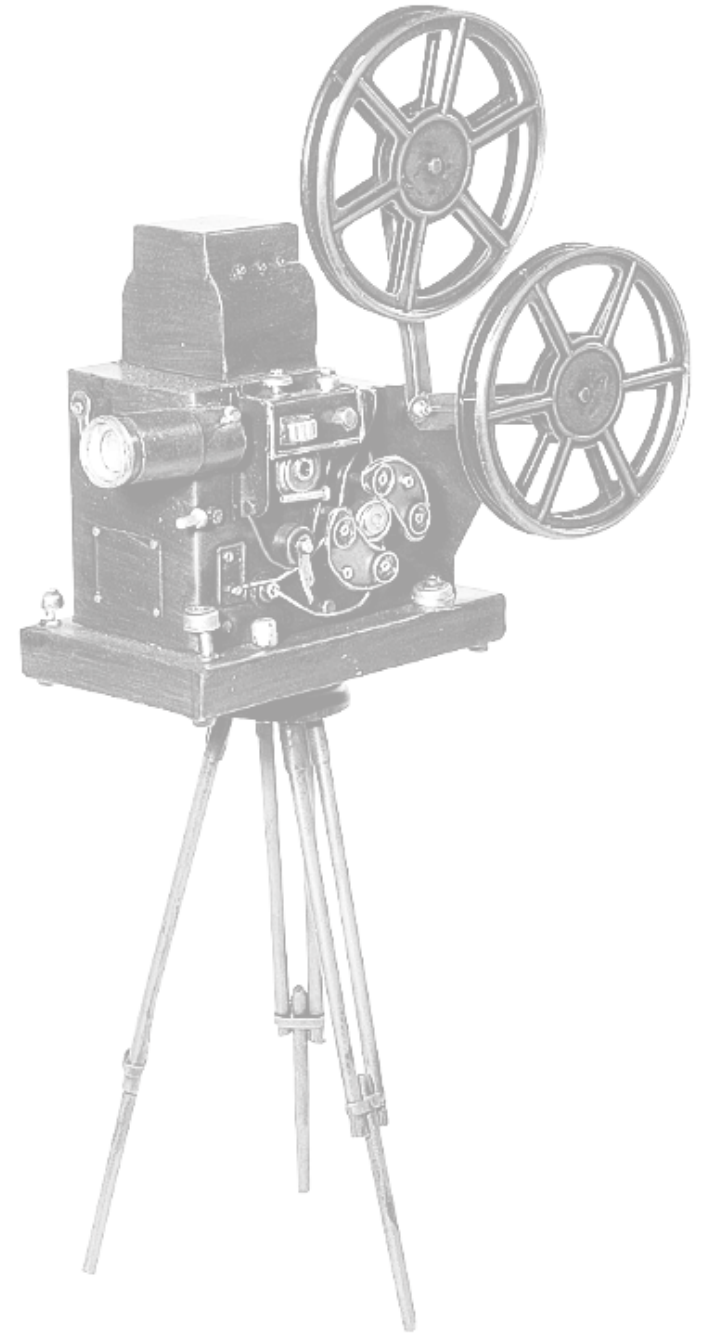
## Howard Shore, cont'd

- “Thematic Complex” (Bribitzer-Stull, 2015)
- “Urgency” motif (*melodic*)
- “Running” motif (*melodic*)
- “Battle” motif (*rhythmic*)
- “Forces of Darkness” motif (*textural, melodic*)



# Score Structure & Style

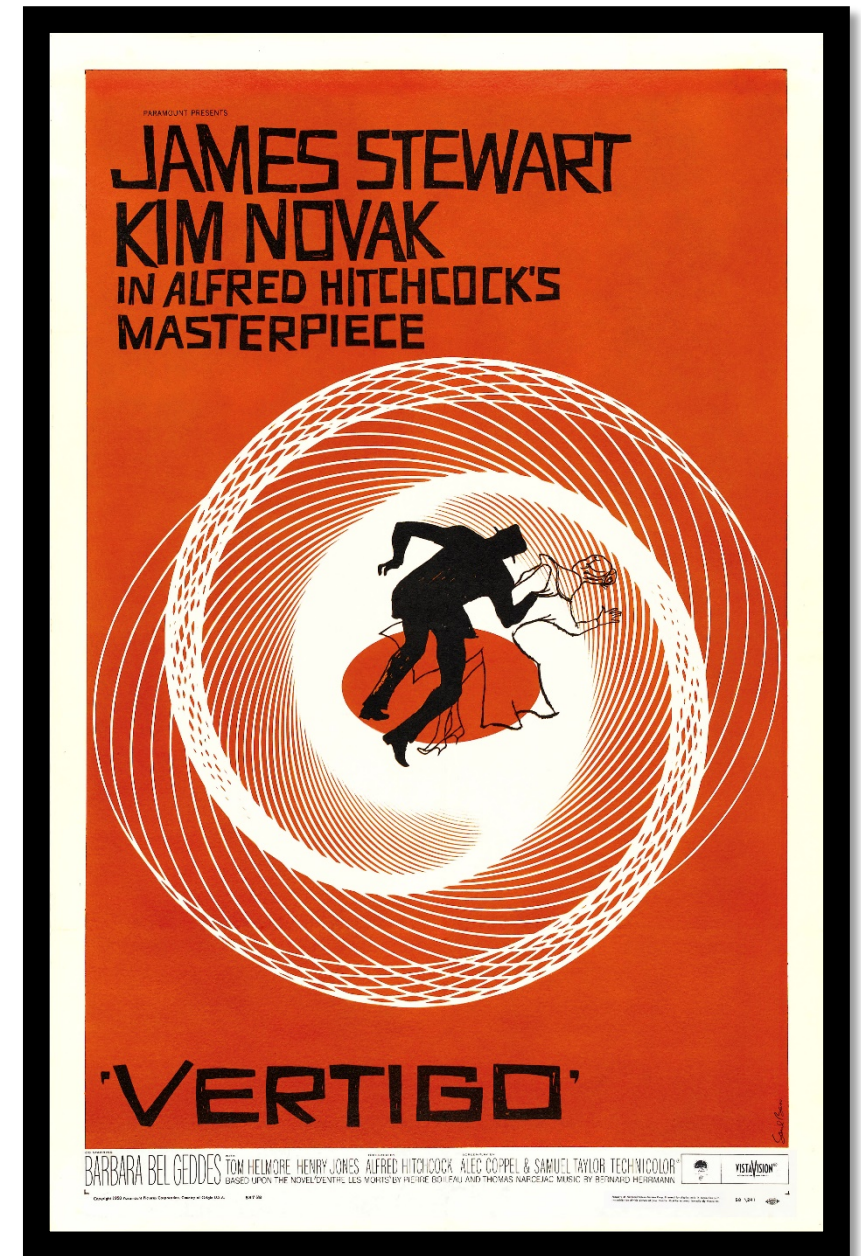
- Unity of character
- Coherent changes throughout
- Compositional elements



# *Vertigo*

## Bernard Herrmann

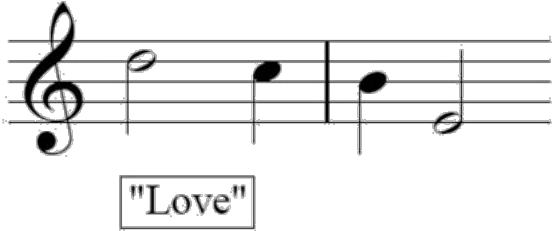
- Themes
  - Identity
  - Truth vs. Self-deception
  - Obsession with the past
  - Passionate desire
- Visual and thematic ‘mirror motif’
- Bartok-like ostinatos
- Stravinsky-like dissonance
- Symmetrical/Similar chords & melodies



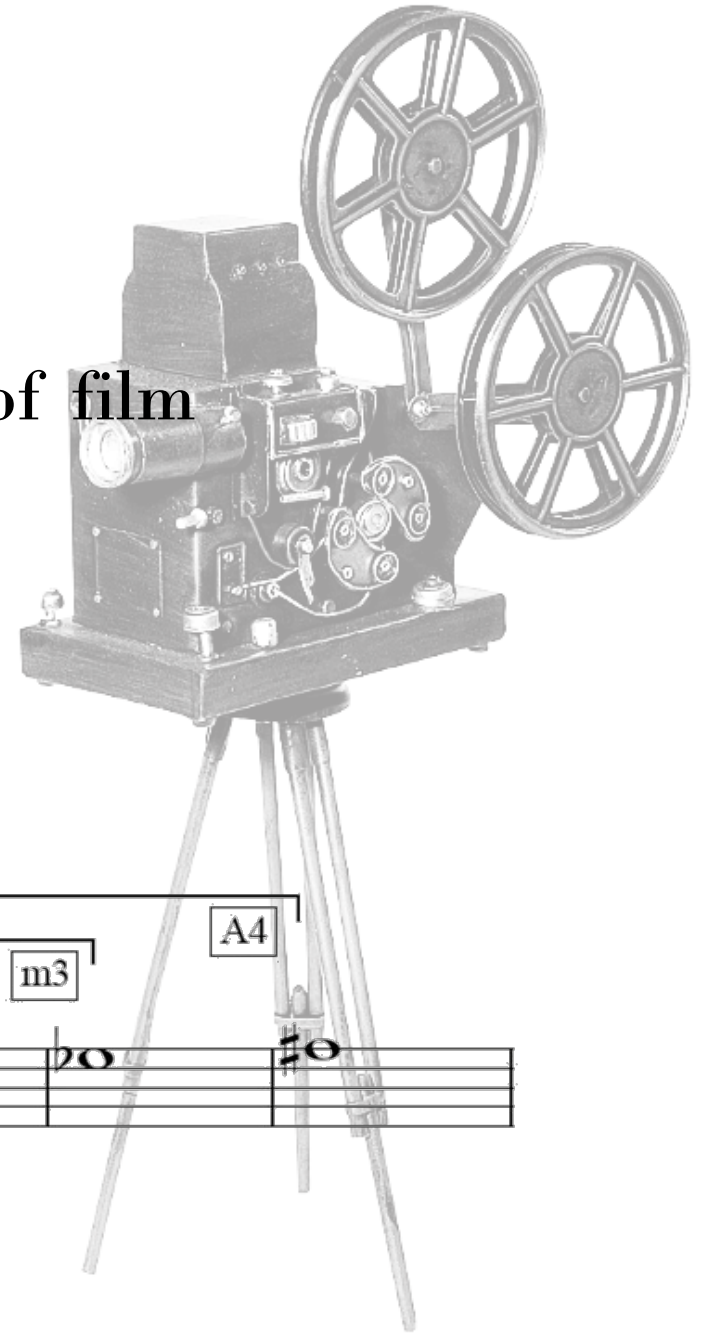
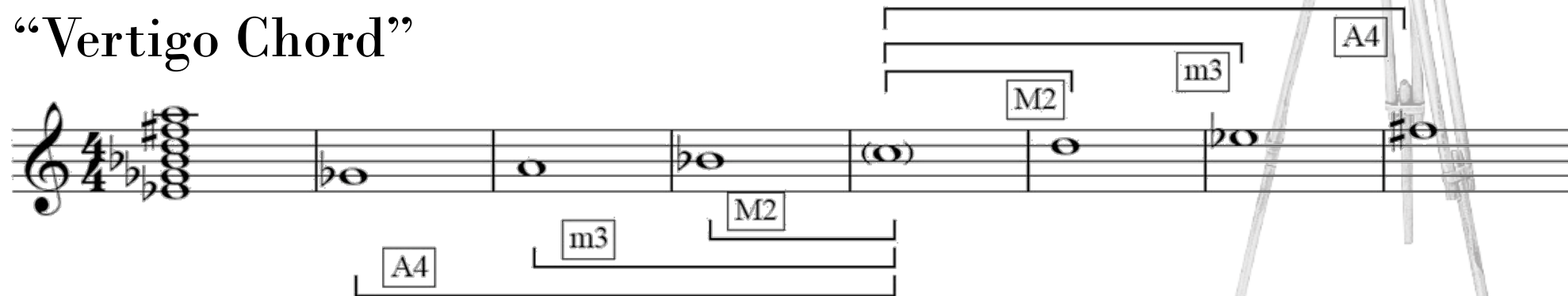
# *Vertigo*

## Bernard Herrmann, cont'd

Mirroring themes dominate first & last halves of film



“Vertigo Chord”





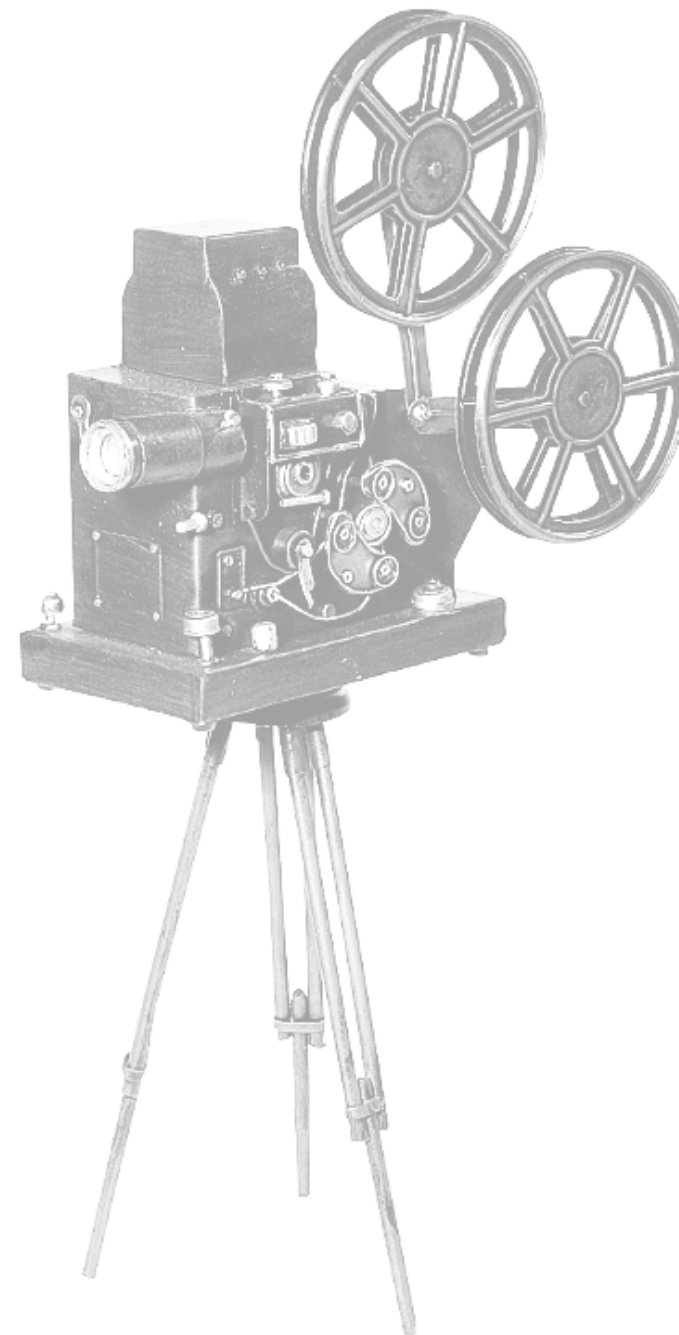
# *Vertigo*

## Bernard Herrmann, cont'd

Mirroring arpeggios in “Prelude”

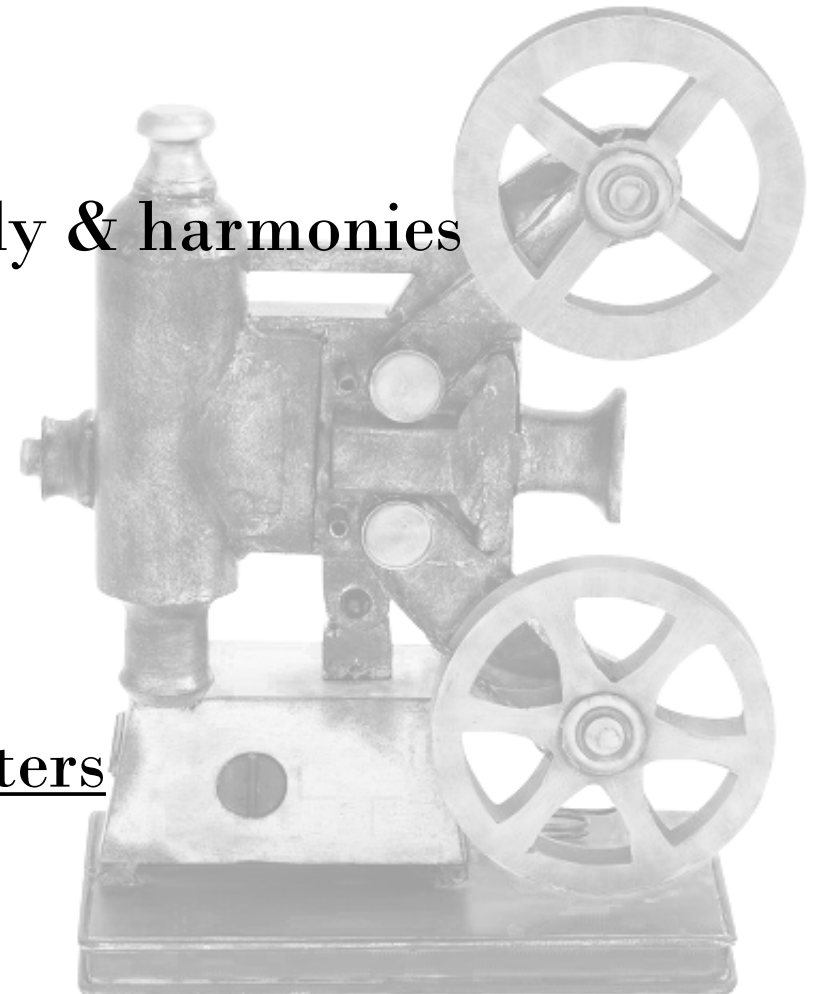


(Diagrams from Dan Blim, 2013)



## 2. Mood & Psychological immersion

- Oldest use of film music
- Texture & Color take prominence over melody & harmonies
- Music often combined with sound design
- Cue audience on how to feel
- Inform audience on characters' emotions
- Make audience feel same emotions as characters



# Cue audience on how to feel

- Hans Zimmer
- Lacks pop cultural references
- Realism & dark tone
- Creates menacing & mysterious world





# Cue audience on how to feel

- Joker Theme: fear & anxiety
  - Buzz on rising pitch
  - Antagonistic, evil, threatening
  - Ambiguous
  - “Punk aesthetic” (Hoxel, 2016)
- Batman Theme: heroic yet dark
  - Low string ostinato
  - Basic 2-note phrase
  - Simple & Serious





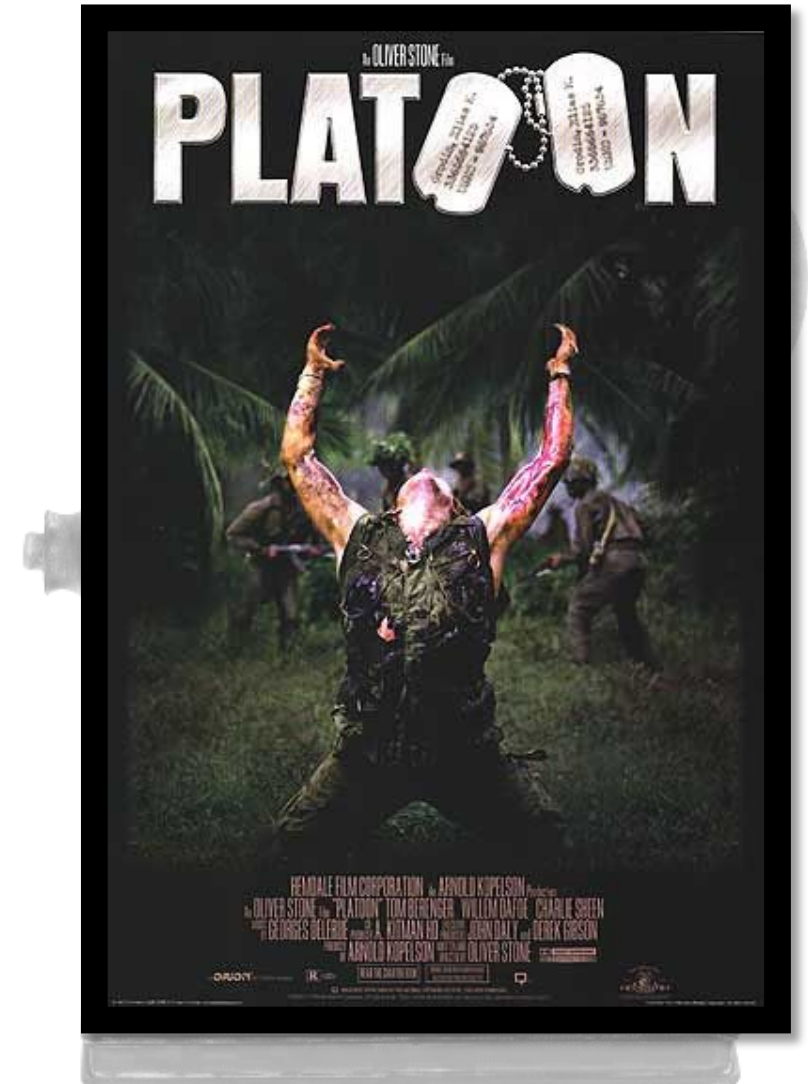
# Inform audience on characters' emotions

- “Bach or Mozart” during ghetto liquidation



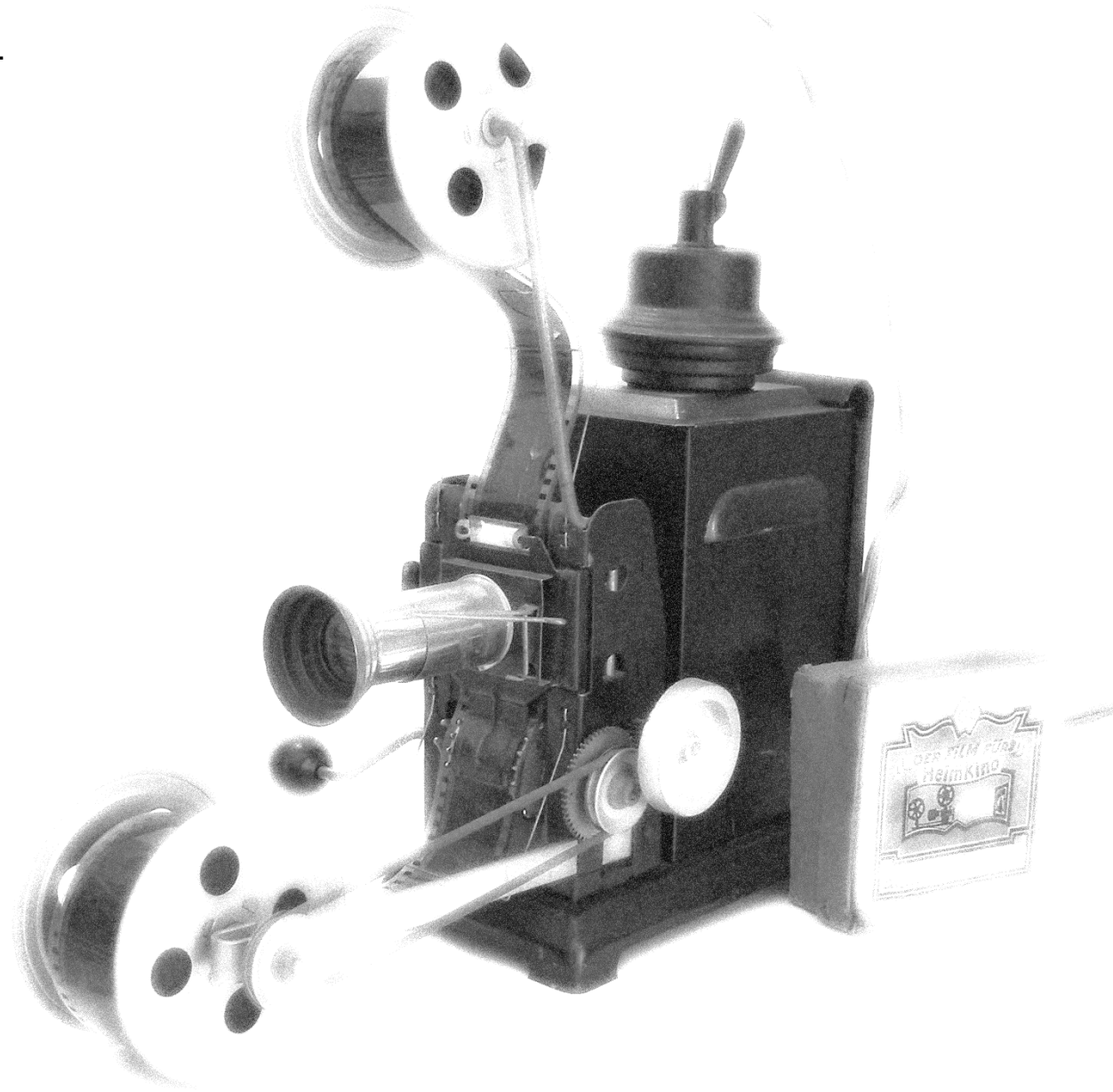
# Make audience feel same emotions as characters

- Director is Vietnam Veteran
- Destructive nature of war on innocent men
- *Adagio for Strings*
- Samuel Barber
- Played after JFK's assassination
- Associates viewers with soldiers' pain



# 3. Cultural association

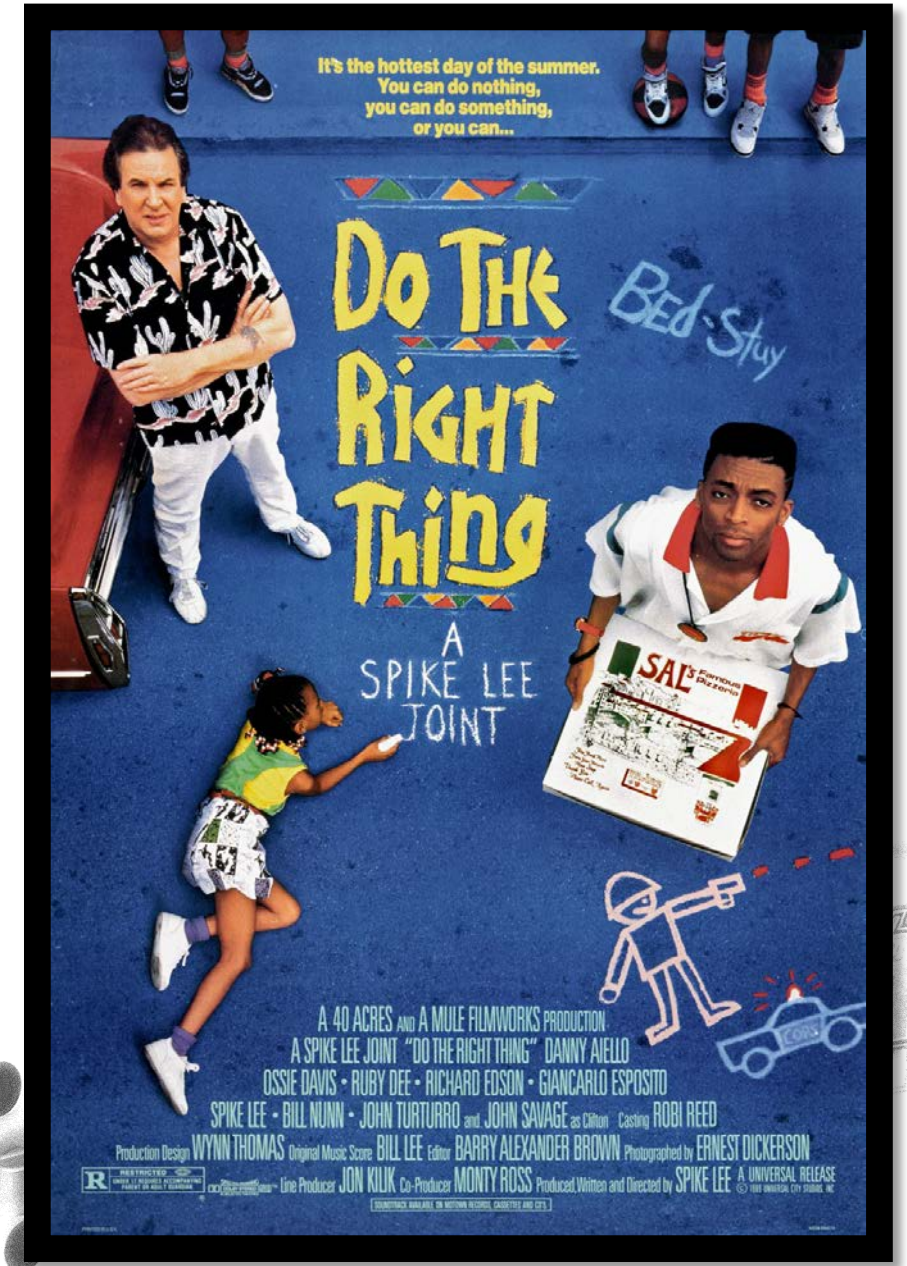
- “Nationalist” music in film
- Use of cultural instruments
- Styles
- Diegetic music





# *Do the Right Thing* Public Enemy

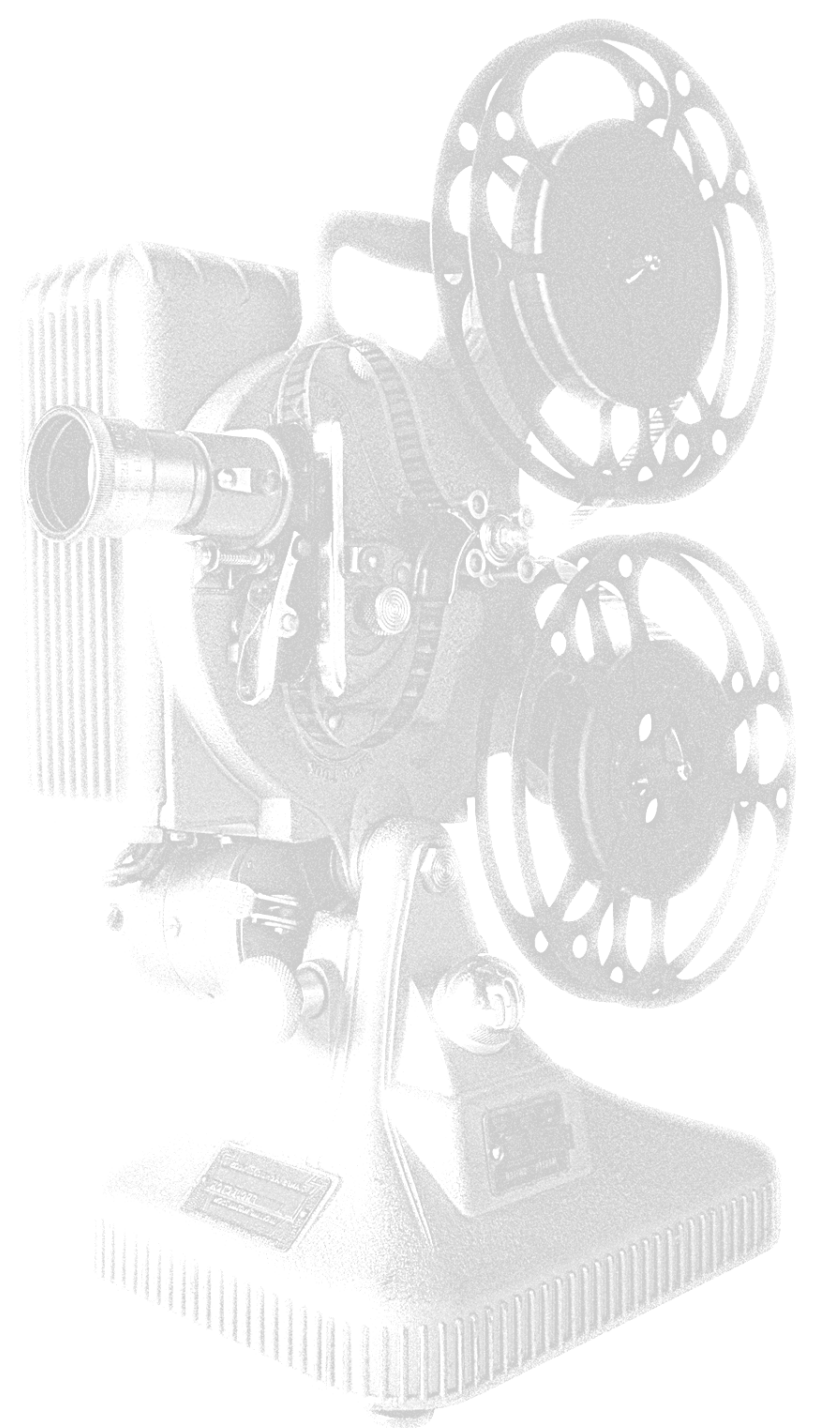
- Themes
  - Racism & Prejudice
  - African Americans, Italians, Koreans
  - Various responses to racial tensions
- “Fight the Power”
  - Diegetic
  - Radio Raheem
  - Hip-hop culture
  - Militant attitudes
  - “Invasion” of Italian culture in pizza joint





# 4. Allusions

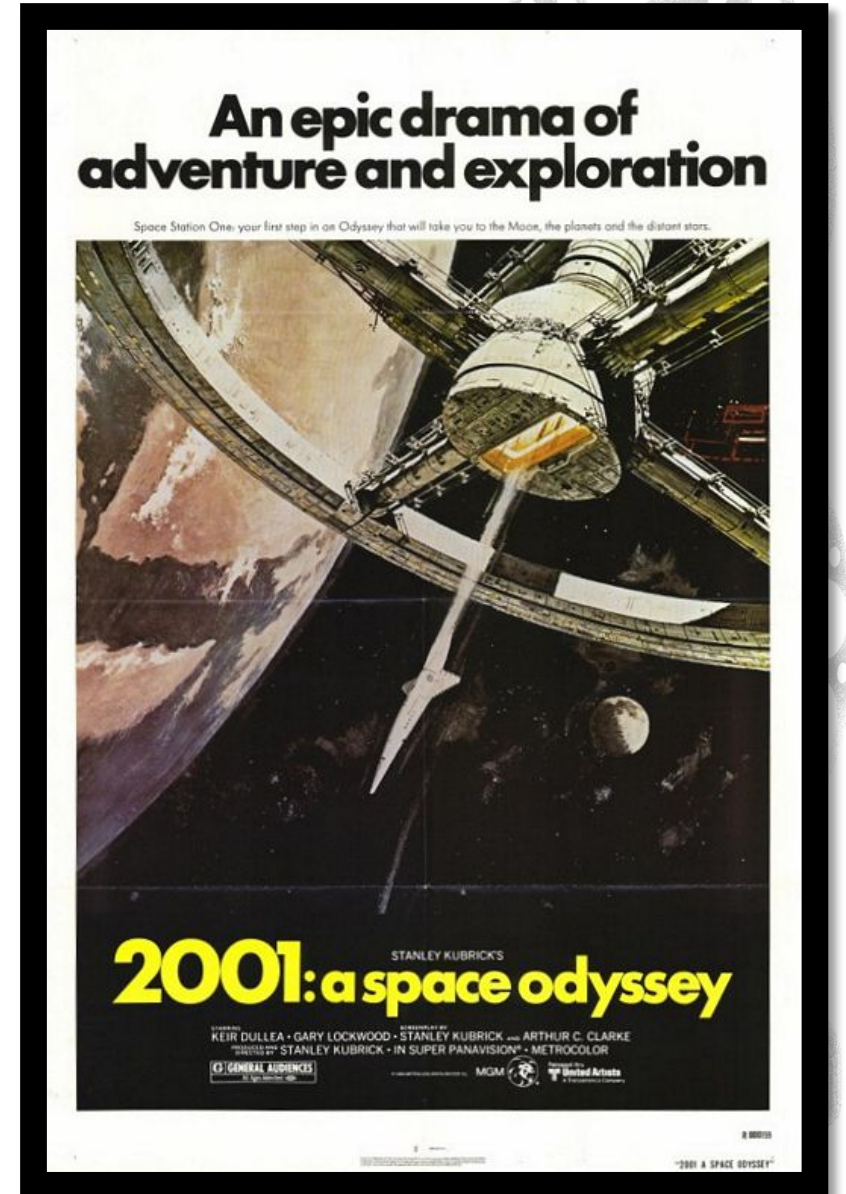
- Other artistic works with similar themes
- Historical events & people
- Cultural phenomena



# *2001: A Space Odyssey*

## Richard Strauss

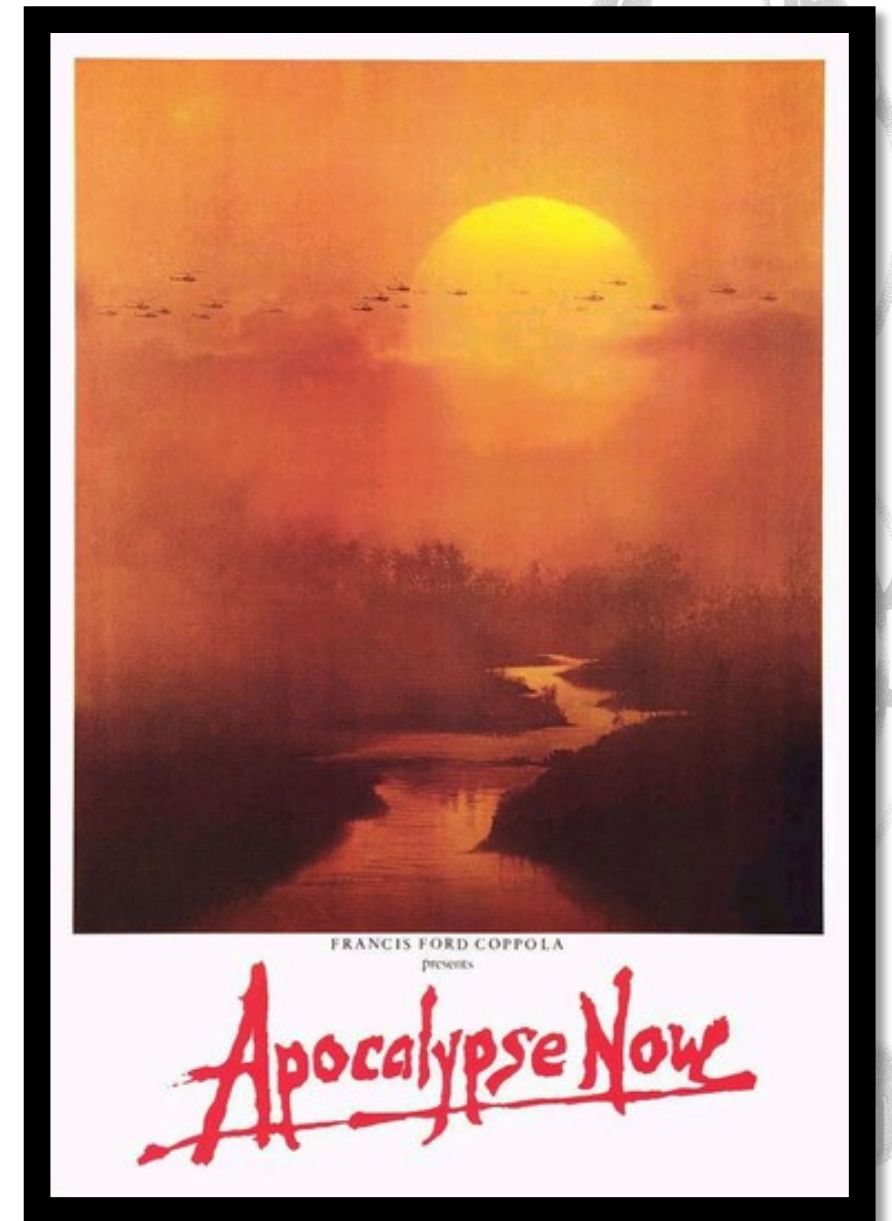
- Themes:
  - Humanism
  - Evolution
  - Technology
- *Thus Sprach Zarathustra* (Richard Strauss)
- Nietzschean philosophy
- Apes, Mankind, Star Child, Übermensch



# *Apocalypse Now*

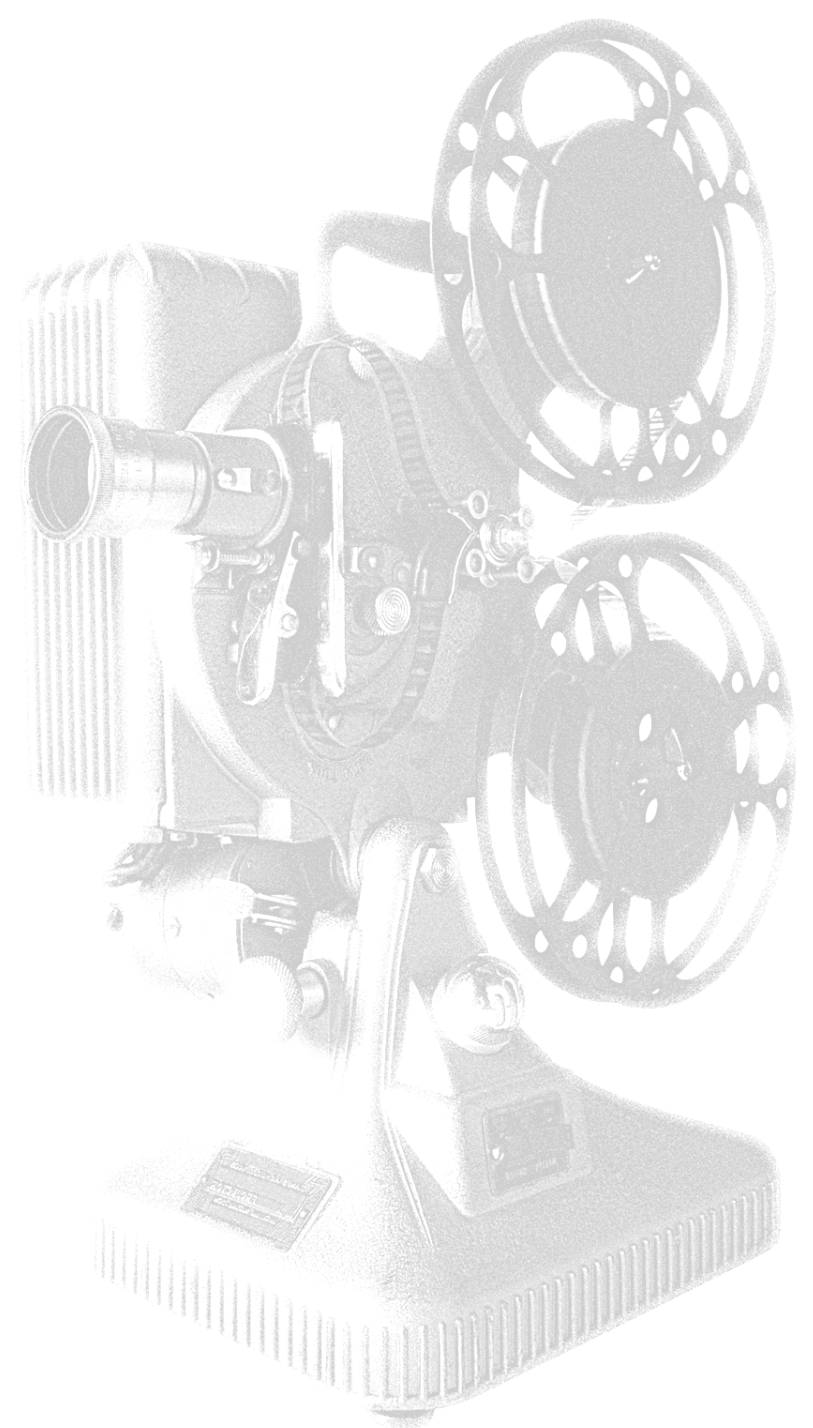
## Richard Wagner

- Themes
  - Absurdity of war
  - Dehumanization of soldiers
  - Depravity of immorality
- Helicopter attack scene
- *Ride of the Valkyries*
  - Used in *Birth of a Nation* battle scenes
  - Use at Nazi meetings



# 4. Aesthetic experience

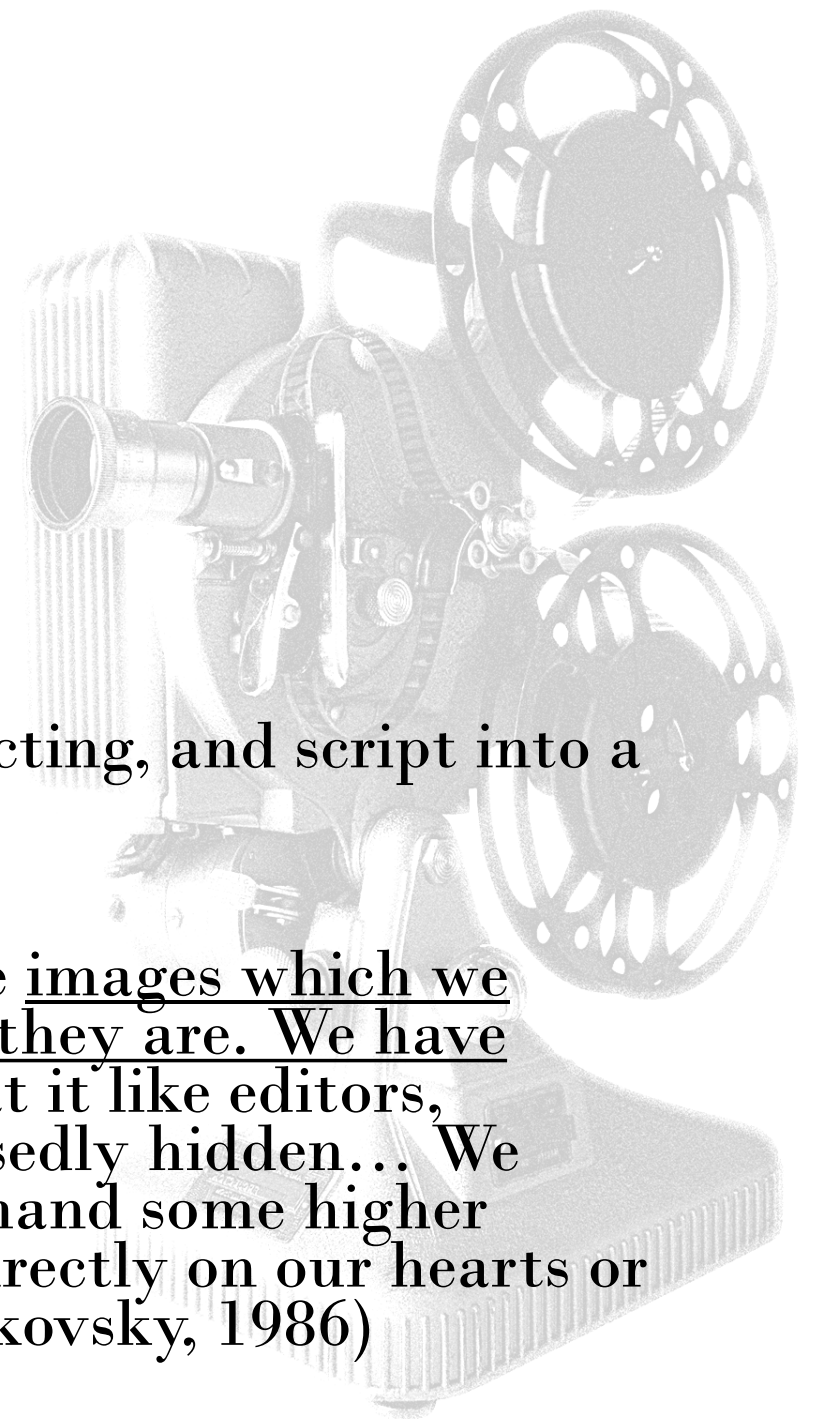
- Use purely for experience
- Experience cinema as cinema
- No extra “baggage”
  - Symbolism
  - Philosophy
  - Etc.





# Andrei Tarkovsky

- “Sculpting in time”
- Slow pace
- Long shots
- Use of Bach
- Sought to merge cinematography, sound, music, acting, and script into a new holistic aesthetic & spiritual expression
- “My objective is to create my own world and these images which we create mean nothing more than the images which they are. We have forgotten how to relate emotionally to art: we treat it like editors, searching in it for that which the artist has supposedly hidden... We think that art demands special knowledge; we demand some higher meaning from an author, but the work must act directly on our hearts or it has no meaning at all.” –*Sculpting in Time* (Tarkovsky, 1986)





*Mirror*, 1975





*Nostalghia*, 1983





*Stalker, 1979*



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